

DECISIONS ON FOREIGN GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Report by the Joint Topographical Subcommittee

THE PROBLEM

1. To insure uniform usage of foreign geographical names in maps and other publications of the War and Navy Departments.

FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

2. The necessity for uniform usage in the spelling of foreign geographical names in Army and Navy maps and other military publications is generally recognized.

3. The U.S. Board on Geographical Names, a civilian agency under the Secretary of the Interior, has been established by executive order as the final authority in the Federal Government for the determination of foreign and domestic nomenclatures.

4. During the past fiscal year the Board on Geographical Names has received an allotment of War Department funds to enable it to maintain a large number of skilled personnel who have been engaged in standardizing usages for the benefit, among others, of the Army Map Service, the Hydrographic Office, the intelligence services, and the Joint Intelligence Study Publishing Board.

5. During the past fiscal year the Board on Geographical Names has frequently been unable to render decisions promptly enough for use in military publications and maps prepared under exacting schedules.

6. The War Department has notified the Secretary of the Interior that no allocation of War Department funds will be available to the Board on Geographical Names in the fiscal year beginning 1 July 1944. The effect of this decision is ~~likely~~ to render the Board incapable of giving sufficiently prompt assistance to the military services on new problems of foreign nomenclature as they arise.

CONCLUSIONS.

7. One result of the action in paragraph 6, above, will be confusion and contradictory usages in military maps and publications.

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8. A joint agency is needed for the duration of the war to render prompt decisions on foreign geographical names in order to standardize usage within the agencies of the War and Navy Departments.

9. Such agency should be under the Joint Intelligence Committee, with a Joint Chiefs of Staff directive to the services enjoining compliance with its decisions.

10. It should be understood that decisions of this agency are subject to review by the U.S. Board on Geographical Names and that decisions by the Board take precedence, unless military expediency requires other action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. That the Joint Intelligence Committee authorize the Joint Intelligence Study Publishing Board to function as the agency in paragraph 8, above, under direction of the Joint Topographical Subcommittee, inasmuch as:

a. The Army Map Service, Hydrographic Office, Department of State, and the Coast and Geodetic Survey have informally agreed to supply personnel needed for this function.

b. The Office of Chief Engineer has informally agreed to supply funds and space for this function.

12. That if paragraph 11, above, is approved, the Joint Intelligence Committee request the Joint Chiefs of Staff to direct agencies of the War and Navy Departments to refer problems of foreign nomenclature to such agency and to enjoin service compliance with its decisions.